

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01456 021454Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----051120 021457Z /72

O 021345Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9608

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

A/EMBASSY GABORONE 008

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1456

EXDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS,MOPS, EFIN, EAID, CG, BE, MR

SUBJ: CONSULTATIONS ON RECOVERY EFFORT FOR ZAIRE

REF: STATE 137343

1. ALTHOUGH WE SPEAK WITH LESS THAN FULL CONFIDENCE, WE

BELIEVE THAT, UNDER THE PROPER CIRCUMSTANCES, MAURITANIA WOULD SUPPORT A SHABA PEACEKEEPING FORCE AND MIGHT BE WILLING TO MAKE A TOKEN MILITARY CONTRIBUTION TO IT. AS WE SEE IT, THE CRUCIAL CONDITION WOULD BE THAT SUCH A FORCE ENJOY AT A MINIMUM WIDE OAU SUPPORT AND PREFERABLE THAT IT BE FORMALLY DESIGNATED AS AN OAU PEACEKEEPING CONTINGENT.

2. FORM A MILITARY STANDPOINT, THERE IS A PRECEDENT OF SORTS FOR SUCH A MOVE. LAST FALL, THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT WAS APPARENTLY WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE A BATTALION TO THE PROPOSED CEAO MUTUAL DEFENSE FORCE. ALSO, WITH THE WAR IN THE SAHARA GOING SOMEWHAT BETTER FROM THE MAURITANIAN STANDPOINT, THE ARMY MIGHT BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO SEND A SMALL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE TO ANOTHER PART OF THE CONTINENT.

3. POLITICALLY THERE ARE SEVERAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF MAURITANIAN PARTICIPATION. FIRST, THEIR TROOPS WOULD BE SEEN AS GOING TO THE AID OF A COUNTRY WHOSE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY WAS BEING THREATENED BY AN OUTSIDE FORCE. THE PARALLES WITH THE SAHARA SITUATION IS OBVIOUS. SECONDLY, WHILE THEY WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO SAY SO IN PUBLIC, THE MAURITANIANS WOULD FAVOR SUCH A PEACEKEEPING FORCE AS A COUNTER TO SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CONTINENT. FINALLY, THE NOTION OF AN AFRICAN SOLUTION TO AN AFRICAN PROBLEM WOULD BE APPEALING HERE.

4. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF NEGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL.  
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FIRST OF ALL, AS KING HASSAN POINTED OUT IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE GRAHAM (STATE 136208 NOTAL) A PEACHKEEPING FORCE BACKED ONLY BY "MODERATE" AFRICAN COUNTRIES COULD SERVE AS A PRECEDENT FOR A FUTURE "PROGRESSIVE" INTERVENTION IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CONTINENT, NOTABLE THE SAHARA. AN ALGERIAN-CUBAN "PEACEKEEPING" FORCE IN THIS REGION IS A SPECTER WHICH WE BELIEVE THE MAURITANIANS MUST HAVE CONTEMPLATED.

5. THERE ARE OTHER FOREIGN, DOMESTIC, AND MILITARY PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD ALSO MILITATE AGAINST MAURITANIAN PARTICIPATION. FIRST, AS A MINOR AFRICAN STATE, MAURITANIA TRIES NOT TO BE INVOLVED IN CONTROVERSY ON THE CONTINENT. THUS, WERE THE NEW PEACEKEEPING FORCE TO BE AS CONTROVERSIAL AS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MOROCCAN INTERVENTION IN SHABA I, THE MAURITANIANS MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO BACK AWAY FROM SUPPORTING IT. FURTHER, AS WE POINTED OUT IN NOUAKCHOTT 1437 (NOTAL), THE MAURITANIANS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO AVOID AN OPEN DISPUTE WITH THE SOVIETS, AND WERE MOSCOW TO COME OUT STRONGLY AGAINST THE PROPOSED PEACEKEEPING FORCE, THE MAURITANIANS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE MORE RELUCTANT TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVILVED IN IT.

6. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, THE MAURITANIAN LEADERSHIP FACES THE

CHARGE THAT IT HAS BITTEN OFF MORE THAN IT CAN CHEW IN THE SAHARA CONFLICT. FURTHER MILITARY INVOLVEMENT ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA MIGHT BE VIEWED HERE AS COMPOUNDING THE INITIAL MISTAKCE. ALSO, DESPITE THE IMPROVED MILITARY SITUATION IN THE SAHARA, THE MAURITANIAN ARMY IS ALREADY STRAINED BY THE WAR, AND GIVING IT ANOTHER MSSION, HOWEVER SMALL, AT THIS JUNCTURE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED UNWISE FROM A PURELY MILITARY STANDPOINT.

7. ON BALANCE, WE ARE CERTAIN THAT MAURITANIA WOULD GIVE A SHABA OPERATION THE SORT OF "PRIVATE" SUPPORT MENTIONED IN KING HASSAS'S INTERVIEW. PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT BY THE LEADERSHIP OF SUCH A MOVE WOULD DEPEND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT WAS SANCTIONED BY THE OAU, AND A MAURITANIAN MILITARY CONTRIBUTION  
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WOULD IN ANY CASE BE NO MORE THAN TOKEN. DUNBAR

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## Message Attributes

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